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## The Organization of a Library

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### Cataloguing

When a library has been accessioned and classified, it is not yet in its most convenient form for readers until another record, the catalogue, is made.

A library catalogue is a complete list of all the material owned by a library, whether books, periodicals, pamphlets, music, pictures, or lantern-slides, arranged according to a definite plan and made accessible by printing or otherwise to the uses of the library. The purpose of the catalogue is to afford to readers a means of quick and ready reference, and when properly and intelligently made and used it should show the line of least resistance to the contents of the books on the shelves of any given library. A catalogue may be regarded in two ways; according to (1) the plan on which its entries are arranged, and (2) the external form in which it appears.

The special function and nature of any given library must always determine the plan of arrangement adopted in its catalogue. This plan may be one of two; either an arrangement by general subject, with minute subdivisions under each broad division, which is called in its various forms a systematic, classed, or subject catalogue; or a strictly alphabetical list of authors, titles, and subjects, called a dictionary catalogue. Both have advantages, and both are in use in leading libraries. A large library of scientific bent may, with great propriety, make use of the first or subject form, while a public, school, or circulating library usually finds the dictionary catalogue more convenient for its readers.

A subject catalogue should give in addi-

tion to the subject-word used, the author, title, and whatever other information concerning the book the library may decide to impart, and also the call number, giving the location of the book in the library, for the convenience of the reader if the library gives its patrons free access to the shelves, or for the use of the assistant if the open-shelf system is not in use. When the library is a large one, and its field comprehensive, a subject catalogue should be supplemented by an alphabetical list of all the subject-words used, with references from common synonyms not used. An author-list, also arranged alphabetically, is found to save much time and trouble, when placed conveniently near the subject catalogue. The disadvantages of this form of catalogue are apparent, since it must frequently necessitate the consulting of two and sometimes three separate records. Its chief advantage lies in its logical and suggestive arrangement.

The attendants of any library are accustomed to hear and answer one or the other of the following questions: "What books have you on a certain subject?" or, "Have you a given book by a given author?" Occasionally the searcher after truth asks for the book by its title, if that happens to be a striking one, as is often true in the case of fiction. The catalogue should afford to the reader and attendant a convenient and direct means of answering such questions.

A dictionary catalogue, as its name indicates, is an arrangement of author, title, and subject in one straight alphabet, and is regarded by most librarians as the most direct means of answering such questions.

Suppose, for example, a reader is interested in the subject of birds. Either he wishes a particular book on that subject, say Mabel Osgood Wright's *Birdcraft*, in which case he consults the catalogue under W, where he finds the book entered; or he wishes to know what the library has on birds, in which case he turns to the catalogue under B, where he finds not only all of Mabel Osgood Wright's books on birds, but also arranged alphabetically by authors all the books owned by the library on the same subject, with references to books on related subjects, necessitating therefore the consulting of but one list. The advantages of having such a list for consultation hardly need comment.

In compiling a catalogue it is also necessary to determine the external form which it is to take. Formerly, all libraries published printed catalogues in book or pamphlet form. Obviously such a catalogue could never adequately represent the resources of any library at any given time, since during the time required for the compilation, revision, printing, and proof-reading of such a catalogue the library would probably receive numerous additions, necessitating the almost immediate issue of supplementary bulletins. The disadvantage above mentioned of compelling readers to consult several lists in place of one again confronts us, though it is in part offset by the fact that copies of such a catalogue can be multiplied and allowed to leave the library either by sale or otherwise. One of the worst features in connection with a printed catalogue, however, is its expense, which would make it an im-

possibility for most small libraries, if there were no other objection to its use.

The only alternative is what is known as the card or slip catalogue, in which each book, whether it comprises one volume, a part of a volume, or several hundred volumes, is entered under its author on a stiff paste-board card, which is provided with some device for fastening it safely in a drawer or case, where it can be consulted with ease, but from which it cannot readily be removed. This method, while it presents some very obvious difficulties, among which may be mentioned the facts that but a limited number of readers can consult it at the same moment, and that it can be used in but one place—the library—presents likewise the very decided advantages of allowing speed in compiling, by means of which the entries may be kept practically up to date, of allowing any number of insertions at any time, doing away with the necessity of printing supplementary bulletins, unless the library chooses to use such bulletins for purposes of bringing itself before the public, and of contributing very materially to an economical administration of the library. The form of catalogue, therefore, urgently to be recommended for a modern library, whether for a school, literary society, or public library, is a dictionary card-catalogue. A few simple rules for compiling such a catalogue will be given in the June number of the COURSE OF STUDY.

**References:** Spofford, *Book for all Readers*; Plummer, *Hints to Small Libraries*; Dana, *Library Primer*; Cutter, *Rules for a Dictionary Catalogue*; Dana, *Denver Public Library Hand-book*.